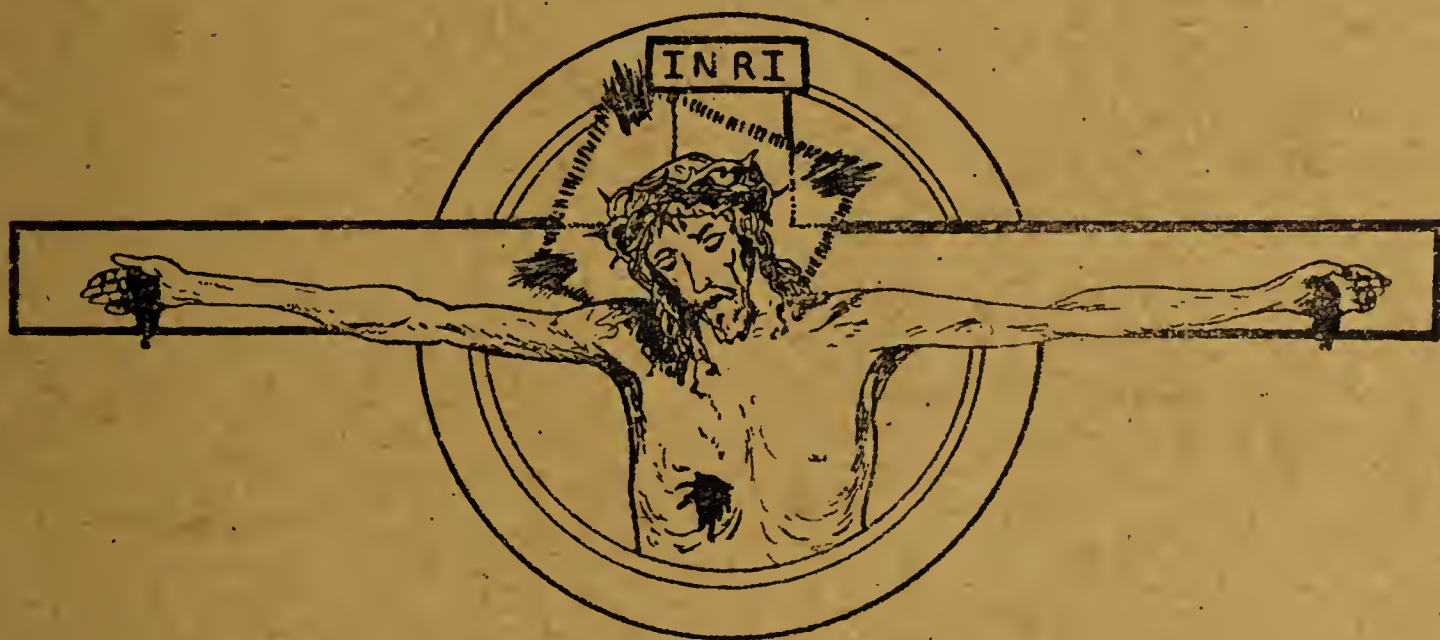




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AT THE NINTH HOUR

PLACE : Golgotha . TIME : The year 33.

Scene 1. (Scene opens on the hill of Golgotha, Calvary, outside Jerusalem. Three piles of dirt where holes have been dug, break the level surface of the hill top. Two shovels used in digging have been carelessly left to the side. The high-noon sun beats down with intense light.

The tumult of a crowd is heard first in the distance, then closer, then closer. All of a sudden, a mob of Jews, priests, and soldiers bursts onto the scene. Before them they thrust One fevered, bruised, bleeding, dirty, Who carries a cross.))

MOB: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! (Soldiers emerge from the crowd, push the Jews away, and quickly strip the wretched Crossbearer of His blood-stained garments. These are gleefully seized by some of the mob and carried off to the side. The soldiers, meanwhile, have thrown the Crossbearer upon His own cross. A priest steps forward from among the mob and spits at the prostrate form. As the soldiers begin to drive the nails, he scoffs:)

PRIEST : Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thyself. (draws parchment roll from the fold of his garment and reads) Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews! (laughs fiendishly-screams:) King of the Jews! (throws paper to a soldier who tacks it to the head of the cross. Having finished their gruesome task of nailing the Victim to the rough cross, the soldiers now raise it above the prepared hole. With a heavy thud the cross falls into place. The awful jar tears at the nails in the hands and feet and nearly wrenches the Victim from His position. The crowd cheers madly.)

ONE JEW : Let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ.

ANOTHER JEW : If thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.

THIRD JEW : Bah! He saved others; Himself He cannot save.

CURTAIN:

SCENE 2. (Same place three hours later. Darkness covers the earth. Dimly visible now are only the figures of a man and two women huddled below the cross. A soldier lingers to the side. The man and women are weeping. A low moan is heard.)

JESUS : Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (the outline of two crosses gradually become visible in the darkness, one to the left, and one to the right.)

THIEF ON LEFT : If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.

THIEF ON RIGHT : Neither dost thou fear God, seeing that we are under the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly. But this Man hast done no evil. (to Jesus) Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom.

JESUS : Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise. (to one of the women) Woman, behold thy son. (to the man) Behold thy mother. (pause) I thirst. (The man below cross motions to soldier. The soldier puts a sponge to a spear and raises it to the lips of Jesus.

JESUS : (tasting) It is consummated. (dies) (a crash of thunder is heard)---

C U R T A I N :

HOW MANY LINES OF THIS TRAGEDY HAVE YOU YOURSELF WRITTEN ? OBSERVE THIS HOLY WEEK with prayer and penance. ATTEND all devotions at your parish church.

NEWS DIGEST

BOSTON, April 1-- The Boston Post in a copyrighted story said today that James Roosevelt, eldest son of the President, and Miss Romelle Schneider, his former nurse, would be married by a Catholic priest shortly after Easter. The Post said young Roosevelt would probably be married in Los Angeles and that James "had been taking instructions quietly in the Catholic faith."

VATICAN CITY, March 24-- Because it will be so difficult for the people of Rome to reach St. Peter's under war transportation conditions, Pope Pius will not celebrate Easter Mass in the great church, the Vatican News Service reports.

"Neither will he give his customary blessing from the balcony of St. Peter's, and probably will not pronounce his scheduled homily to the world."

HONG KONG-- Two Marynoll Sisters were obliged to cool boiling water from a thermos bottle in order to baptize a dying infant on a busy crowded street in one of the poorest parts of the city. The Sisters had seen the infant the day before, but had no water with which to perform the baptism. They ventured to ask the nearest shopkeeper for some water. All that he had available was a thermos of hot water which many of the poorer people drink in lieu of their traditional tea.

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"DILIGE DEUM ET FAC QUOD VIS!" --

"LOVE GOD AND DO WHAT YOU WILL."

St. Augustine